

JACOBSTVILLE FINNISH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Jacobsville vicinity
Houghton County
Michigan

HABS MI-419
MI-419

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JACOBSTVILLE FINNISH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

HABS No. MI-419

- Location: ¾ mi. northwest of Jacobsville on a dirt road which was in the platted Village of Sandstone, Torch Lake Township, Houghton County, Michigan. (So., 793 ft. of SE ¼ of SW ¼ Section 18 of Twp 53, Range 32W)
- Present Owner: The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hancock, Michigan.
- Present Use: The church is used by the Hancock congregation for Sunday evening vesper services in the summer.
- Significance: The Jacobsville Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church is a simple frame structure with unpretentious interiors. It was built by Finnish quarriers soon after the sandstone deposits were discovered near Jacobsville. The church, kept in good repair, has continued to serve the Finns until the present day. It represents a long tradition of unostentatious Lutheran worship.
- Historian: Wendy Nicholas, August 1975.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Dates of Erection: The main body of the church was erected in 1886 with the bell tower added in 1892.
2. Architect, builder, suppliers: Leander Sinko, a Finnish immigrant, designed and built the main body of the church in order to have a place to marry the girl of his dreams. Sinko also built farmhouses in Jacobsville and at Portage Entry.

The bell tower, according to the minute book of the congregation's meetings, was built by Sinko and P. Arvola. The two builders used the drawings and sketches of the congregation's bell tower committee. The materials for the bell tower were purchased from the Chassel sawmill.

3. Original and subsequent owners: Title to the church prior to 1919 is not clear. No deeds were recorded in the courthouse before that time. Leander Sinko built the church in 1886 with "contributions from the people of Jacobsville." ("History of Jacobsville," 4 page paper in possession of Mrs. Harold (Eunice) Guy, Jacobsville, Michigan. Lake Linden P.O.) A minute book of the congregation's meetings beginning from 1891 gives

JACOBSTVILLE FINNISH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

HABS No. MI-419

(page 2)

“Jacobsville Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church” as the formal name of the church.

Yet, according to post-1919 deeds, the building was constructed on land either in Block 5 or Block 10 of the village of Sandstone, Torch Lake Township, Houghton County.

Sandstone, however, was not platted until 1888. After 1919 the deeds for the church were recorded in the Houghton County Courthouse. It is interesting to note that record was made immediately after sandstone ceased to be quarried in Jacobsville. See the following chain of title:

CHAIN OF TITLE FOR JACOBSTVILLE CHURCH, IN VILLAGE OF SANDSTONE,
TORCH LAKE TWP, HOUGHTON COUNTY, MICHIGAN. BLOCK 5 (9 lots) & BLOCK
10 (3 lots).

Auditor General to George Pfeifer

Entire Block 5 for \$8.52 and Entire Block 10 for \$8.52

1/4/19_ Vol. R, pp. 284-285. 1912, '13, & '14 Tax Deed.

Auditor General to George Pfeifer

Entire Block 5 for \$2.28 and Entire Block 10 for \$2.28

8/19/19 Vol. K, p. 290. (Block 5) & p.281 (Block 10) Tax Deed 1915.

George Pfeifer & Wife to Iver Saksi

Entire Block 5 for \$1.00 and Entire Block 10 for \$1.00

2/14/19 Vol. 100, p. 20. QUIT CLAIM.

Auditor General to Iver Saksi

Lots 1 to 9, inclusive of Block 5 for \$2.43

8/1/28 Vol. K, p. 566. 1924 TAX DEED

Auditor General to State of Michigan

Lots 1 to 9 inclusive, Block 5 and Lots 1 to 3 inclusive, Block 10

12/12/32 Vol. 127, p. 149 (Block 5), Vol. 127, p. 146 (Block 10). DEED

State of Michigan to Eino W. Ahonen et al.

Lots 1 to 9 Block 5 and Lots 1 to 3 Block 10

12/4/50 Vol. 149, p. 561. DEED

Eino W. Ahonen & Wife to Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church, Jacobsville

Entire Block 5 and Block 10

8/31/51 Vol. 155, p. 200. WARRANTY DEED

Fred Marsy, et al (the surviving members of Jacobsville Church) to Finnish Evangelical
Lutheran Church, Hancock

Entire Block 5 and Block 10

1/10/52 Vol. 154, p. 417. QUIT CLAIM DEED.

4. Original plans and construction: No drawings were located. Only the rectangular nave was erected originally without the bell tower. The structure rested on wooden piers then.

5. Alterations and Additions: In 1891 the sandstone foundation was laid although the wooden piers were retained. Funds for the work were collected from the congregation and from the proceeds from a "box social." The next year, in August 1892, the congregation decided to purchase a bell. Money was collected to pay for it and by October 2 the bell had arrived. It was cast at the Buckeye Bell Foundry by the Vanduzen & Tift Company, Cincinnati. After the arrival of the bell, the congregation decided to erect a bell tower. Leander Sinko and P. Arvola were hired to build the tower at the south end of the church, according to drawings made by the church's Bell Tower Committee. The men were paid \$2.00 and \$1.75 a day, respectively. The supplies for the construction were ordered from the Chassel sawmill. Recently, in 1975, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hancock received grant funds to repair the church. The sandstone foundations and wood piers were removed. The piers were replaced with cinderblocks. Pieces of the original sandstone slabs were used as a facing to hide the piers on three sides. On the remaining (east) side of the church, the stones were laid horizontally much as they were originally. The chimney was rebuilt and the roof received new wood shingles.

B. Historical events and persons associated with the building

The village of Jacobsville grew up around the sandstone quarries which were begun by John H. Jacobs of Marquette. Preparations for quarrying were begun in 1883, with a small amount of stone being removed from the ground in 1884. The new industry attracted numerous people, many Finnish immigrants among them. The quarries operated until 1919.

In 1886 Leander Sinko, a Finnish immigrant, designed and constructed the church with the aid of members of the Jacobsville community. According to Walter Holmlund, presently a summer resident of Jacobsville, Sinko wanted to marry. Since there was no church in which to hold the ceremony, Sinko built one.

The building continued to serve the Finnish population in Jacobsville for ninety years. By 1952, the Jacobsville congregation had dwindled to such a small number that the church was deeded to the more prosperous congregation in nearby Hancock. The Hancock church maintains the structure, but uses it only for summer vesper services.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General statement

1. Architectural character: The Jacobsville Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church is a simple, frame building topped with an attractive, open belfry. The church is without modern

conveniences, remaining much as it was when Jacobstown was an industrious quarry town of more than eight hundred inhabitants.

2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The footprint of the church plan is rectangular and spatially arranged as three bays by one bay. The structure is one-story tall with a three-story bell tower attached. The bell tower plan is essentially square, measuring 10'2" x 12'2". The church itself measures 24'2" x 32'6".

2. Foundations: Pier system. The church originally rested on log piers with sandstone in-between them. Recently cinderblocks have replaced the wood posts.

3. Walls: White painted clapboards cover the tower section while another wood siding, similar although not identical to shiplap and novelty sidings, covers the main part of the building. (See: Harley J. McKee, "Amateur's Guide to Terms Commonly Used in Describing Historic Buildings.") Unlike shiplap, the church's siding is butt not overlapped, yet the effect is similar. Unlike the novelty siding, this is in single units, rather than consisting of one board divided to look like two (fig. 1). The church's corners are accented by vertical corner boards. There is a wide (6") board water table, with drip cap.

4. Structural system, framing: The main body of the church was built using a balloon frame and it covered by 2x6 rafters with king posts and collar braces spaced about 18" apart. The bell tower framing consists of four square, vertical timbers and X-braces on each wall.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: Flight of four wooden steps to entry in bell tower.

6. Chimneys: There was one chimney, but it was removed in 1975.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The church has one entrance at the south into the bell tower. There are narrow double doors of four vertical panels. Above the door is a three-paned overlight. The sill, lintel, and frames are made of plain, flat boards.

b. Windows and shutters: In the main body of the church there are three semi-circular, two-sash windows on both the east and west walls. Again, sills, frames, and lintels are made of flat boards. Protruding above the curved arches are curved drip caps. These windows have very simple, flat board shutters cut to fit the shape of the windows. On the inside surface of the shutters at the level of the hinges are horizontal cross pieces, perhaps for reinforcement. The bell tower is lit by two windows, each with two sashes and mullions; the first is located on west wall of the first floor level and the other on the south front of

the second floor. The sills, frames, and lintels are made of plain flat boards, while drip caps protrude above the arches.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: A new cedar shake roof is presently being installed. The original roof was also cedar shakes.

b. Cornice, eaves: A flat cornice board is beneath the boxed eaves, which return slightly.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: In the central bay of the south end of the church is a three-stage bell tower with an open belfry and a four-sided pyramidal roof cap. A railing of turned balusters encloses the belfry, with jig-sawn decorative archways above. The roof is covered with wood shakes.

C. Description of the interior:

1. Floor plans: The church is entered from the south through the central bell tower. At the north end of the nave, there is a platform on which is placed a paneled altar rail. A free-standing pulpit stands to the east of the altar and an organ to the west, also on the raised platform. Entrance to the belfry stairs is located in the southeast corner of the bell tower. A small closet is underneath the stairs.

2. Stairways: One extremely narrow and steep flight of steps connects the first and second floors of the bell tower along the east wall. A simple rail made from a sapling with its bark removed aids in the negotiation of the stairs. A wooden ladder then provides access to the belfry itself.

3. Flooring: Pine wood boards about five inches wide.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The nave has three inch wide board and bead wainscoting with horizontal board and bead covering the wall surfaces above the dado. The ceiling is semi-hexagonal with a shiplap sort of covering identical to that on the exterior of the bell tower. Narrow strips of molding hide the corners where wall panels meet and where wall and ceiling surfaces intersect. The first floor of the bell tower is similarly treated, although boards are narrower than in the nave and the ceiling is flat.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Double doors into the nave from the bell tower are made of wood and have four rectangular panels; they are identical to the outside doors. The closet has a single, four-panel door made of wood. The narrow door to the stair hall is constructed of four vertical planks. All sills, frames, and lintels are plain, flat boards.

6. Decorative features, and trim: The pulpit, which stands east of the altar, resembles a short-stemmed wine glass. The octagonal pulpit with its semi-circular recesses in each face and 8" wide molding around the top rests on a heavily molded and stemmed base. In its entirety, the pulpit stands about 5' high and has three steps into the preachers' platform. The pews are simple wood benches with curved backs of four horizontal boards. On the aisle side there are decorative, curved X-braces between the front and back legs.

7. Hardware: All of the hardware on the double doors, the knobs, jambs, hinges, and vertical bar locks are bronze and embossed in a combination of geometric and floral designs. The bell is simple with the inscription in Finnish: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob;" Isaiah 2.3

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The church was heated by the cast iron stove at the back of the nave. The stove was manufactured in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1881 by the Litgow Manufacturing Company. It has decoration cast on its side panels: a log cabin on the right, a tree in a field surrounded by a fence on the left, and in the center, a floral arrangement with "Crescent" inscribed above it. The stove flue was connected to the chimney between the nave and the bell tower.

b. Lighting: The church is and always has been lit by kerosene lamps. Presently, seven wall sconces are in place, with brackets for one more in the nave and one in the bell tower. Two large chandeliers, one with four kerosene lights and the other with eight, are located over the center aisle. These are quite ornate, perhaps of cast iron with copper veneer.

c. Plumbing: None.

D. Site: The longitudinal axis of the church runs north to south. Along the north and east sides of the building there is dense vegetative growth, large conifers with heavy underbrush. A small grassy lot west of the church provides parking space for worshippers and there is woods. A tree-lined dirt and gravel lane provides access from the east to west road south of the church. The atmosphere is one of isolation and solitude, providing easy communion with God and nature.

1. Historic Landscape Design: Unknown. No remnants of landscaping were visible.

2. Outbuildings: The outhouse is to be restored.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Deeds in the Houghton County Courthouse, Houghton, Michigan.

Interviews with Walter Holmlund, Jacobsville, Michigan (Lake Linden P.O.), July & August.

Minute Book of the Congregational Meetings of the Jacobsville Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church, beginning 1891, at the Gloria Dei Church (Finnish Evangelical Lutheran), Hancock, Michigan. Written in Finnish, so translated by Professor David Halkola, Houghton, Michigan.

Plat of the Village of Sandstone, Torch Lake Twp., Houghton County, MI 1888 in Register's office, Houghton County Courthouse, Houghton, Michigan.

Wyckoff, J.W. "The Red Stone Industry of the Upper Peninsula." In Keweenaw County Historical Society Collection in Michigan Technological University archives, Houghton, Michigan.

B. Secondary Sources:

"History of Jacobsville," 4 page paper in possession of Mrs. Eunice Guy, Jacobsville, Michigan. Lake Linden P.O.

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Daily Mining Gazette, 1 March 1969.

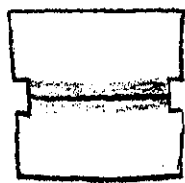
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation was done in the summer of 1975 by Kevin Harrington and Wendy Nicholas for the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, a division of the National Park Service.

Fig. 1 Sketch of siding on the bell tower. By author, 1975.

Jacobsuille Finnish Evangelical Church

sketch of siding on bell tower



ELEVATION



SECTION